

## Projects



### Insect Hotel

#### Preface

Sometime at the beginning of the year I had watched a documentary about gardens and garden culture. Insect hotels were also mentioned in it. I found the idea of building a *hotel* for insects exciting, but had forgotten it again in the last months. I had enough other [projects](#) to take care of here. This month also came the current print edition of [Helmholtz Perspektiven](#), which is published by the [Helmholtz Association](#). On the last page was a tutorial for children on how to build an insect hotel. That convinced me to build one for my balcony. But I wanted it to be a spacy one. What an insect hotel is, you can read quite well in the Internet An insect hotel or insect house, insect wall or insect box is an artificially created nesting and wintering aid for insects, which has been increasingly used since the 1990s, especially by near-natural gardeners and in school biology. The institutions have been made known by numerous European nature conservation associations as insect protection measures that can be implemented practically by anyone with little effort, and they also play an important role [in permaculture](#).

#### Materials

We can get most of the ingredients from nature. We should take care that we do not use wood from fir trees, because insects do not accept it. There are also other rules that have to be observed, but you can check them on the Internet. I got the can from the Turkish supermarket. I had the days with my roommate olives, paprika and [flat bread for breakfast](#). I got the plastic handle from an old packaging that I had to throw in the garbage. Two screws, each with a mother, can be bought in the DIY store or on the Internet. I use recycled paper to install a small heat insulation in the back of the insect hotel. I hope that the paper doesn't get mouldy. I still had an old aluminium tube which I sawed into small pieces. As I have read, however, it can be that the diameter is too large for the small insects. Otherwise I found sticks, bark and an old board from the forest. In it we will drill the riddles. Apart from that we need brushes, white paint and some colored pencils. If you want to paint your insect hotel differently, you can do that of course.



- (Metal/Wood) Saw
- Tin



- Wood, Wood Sticks
- Parallel vice or clamp
- White Paint
- Blue and Red Marker
- 2 x Nuts and screws
- Plastic Band
- Recycling Paper
- Aluminium Pipe
- Drill with Drill Heads
- Safety Glasses
- Brushes
- Acrylic Paint without Solvent

## Realisation

In the first step we will record the positions for the holes with a waterproof pen. So we take the plastic tape (with the prefabricated holes) and hold it as we want it to be. We drill the holes with a drilling machine. Take care that your can cannot slip away, because otherwise the probability of an injury is great. Let your friends help you. When the holes are finished, you can insert the screws, put on the plastic band and screw everything together with the nuts. Most of the time it's enough to tighten it by hand, but if you want to do it properly you can also use pliers and screwdrivers. This method is optional.



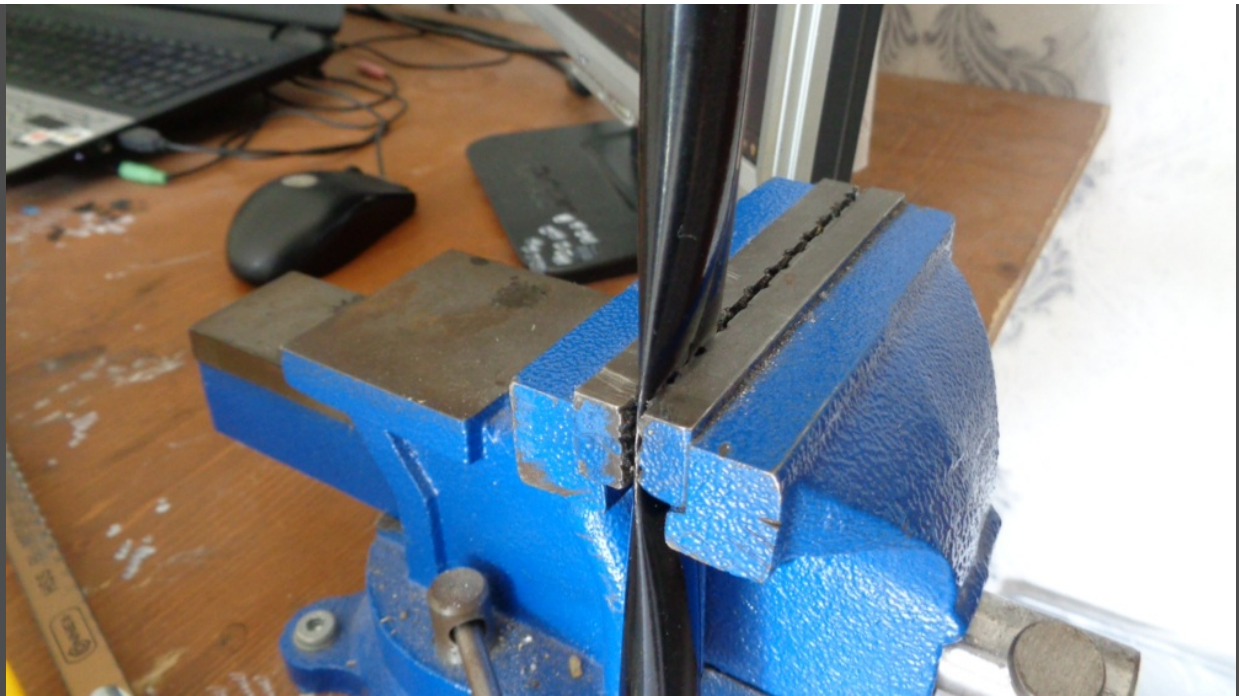


Now we'll take care of the contents of the insect hotel. The main components are small tubes in which insects can hide, overwinter or breed. In the last few centuries man has changed the environment so much that it looks rather bad for insects. Fields have become more extensive and the houses in the cities no longer have as many cracks and shelters as hundreds of years ago in e.g. a farmhouse. In addition, humans ensure that insects die out **faster and faster**. The wooden board, the aluminium tubes and the small sticks are marked and cut to the right length. In some places I still have tree bark wedged in, so that everything sits properly and nothing wobbles or falls out. You also have to remember that the hotel will be placed in a place protected from strong winds.

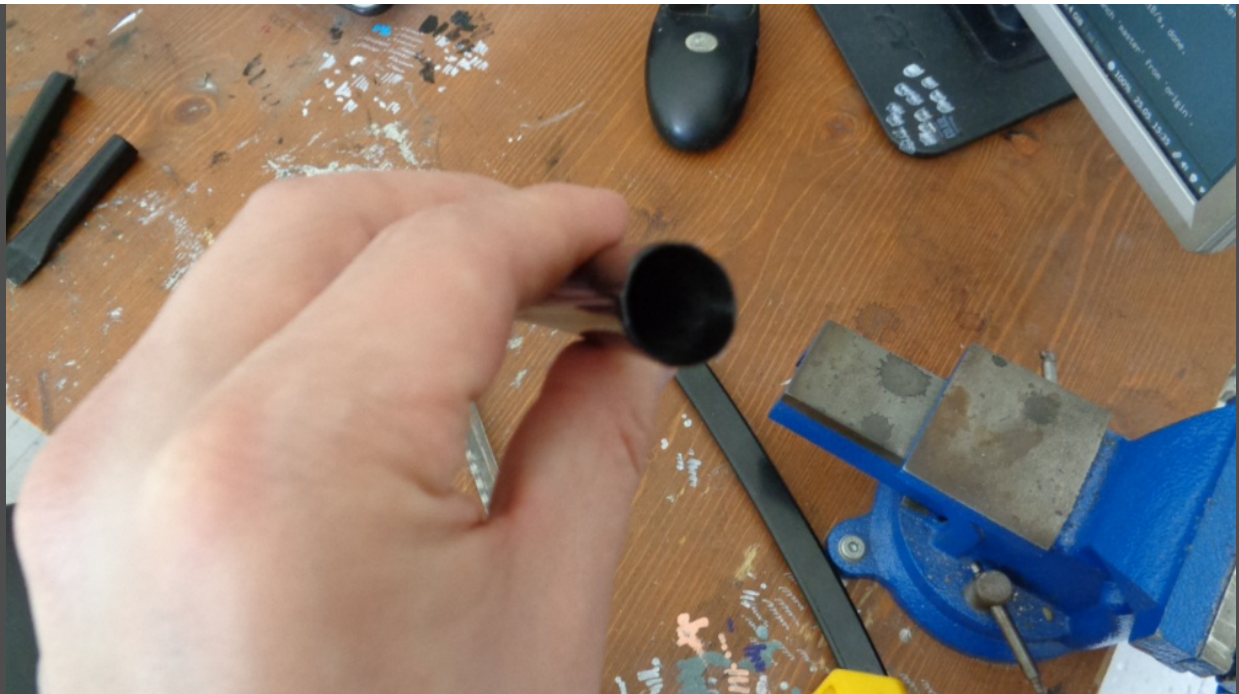


The sawing of the aluminium tube is easy because it is a soft metal. We clamp the material in a vice and saw it into two pieces with a metal saw. If the edges are too sharp, we should grind them off with a metal file. Insects have very delicate wings that can be destroyed quickly. That is why we must not use too soft wood, which splinters quickly or drills untidily. To be honest, I have no idea if metal tubes are used by insects at all. That is why we do not stick anything. Glue can contain solvents that are harmful to insects and we want to avoid that. That's why our paint and the markers are also water-based paint.









We saw the sticks with a wood saw and make sure that the edges have no splinters. When drilling we have to make sure that the wood is held firmly or we clamp it firmly in a parallel vice. I have used drill heads with different diameters, because there are also insects of different sizes. You can use as wood as you want or as many as fit into the insect holder. Please make sure that the wood is dry, otherwise it can get mouldy and is bad for insects. Just imagine, you would have to sleep in a damp bed. You wouldn't like that, would you?





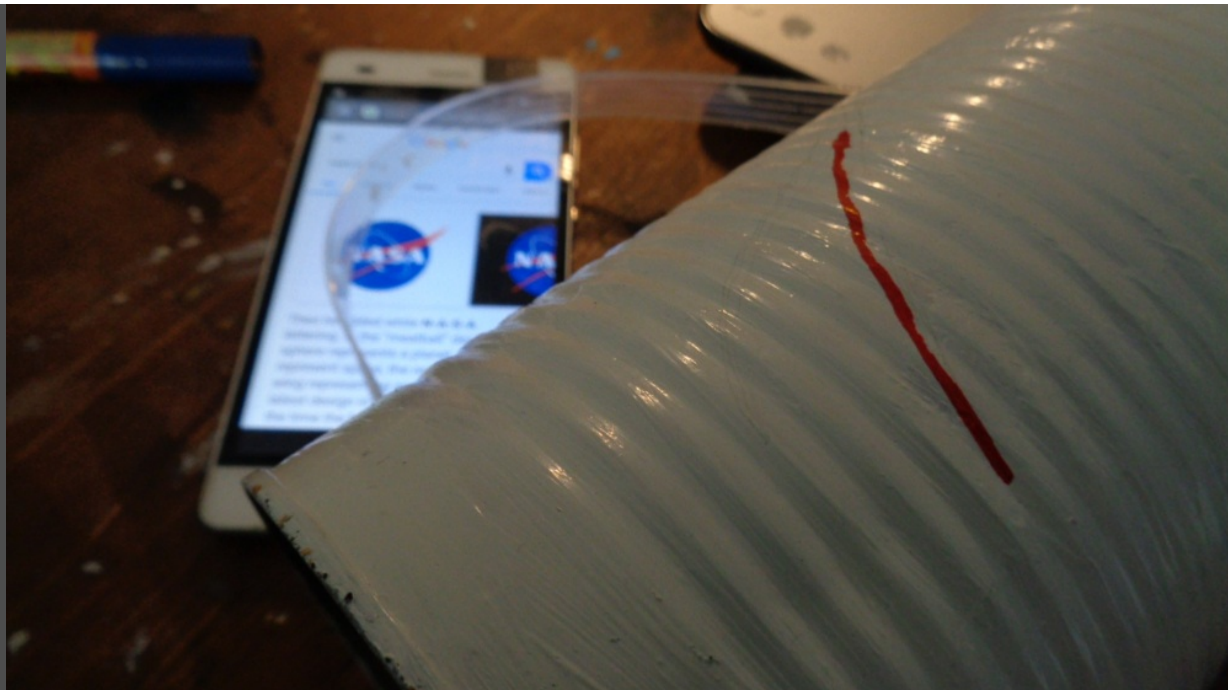
After I finished building the Insektenhotel, I showed it to my roommates, who loved this idea so much. One of my roommates asked me with a wink why the can is not painted white and has no

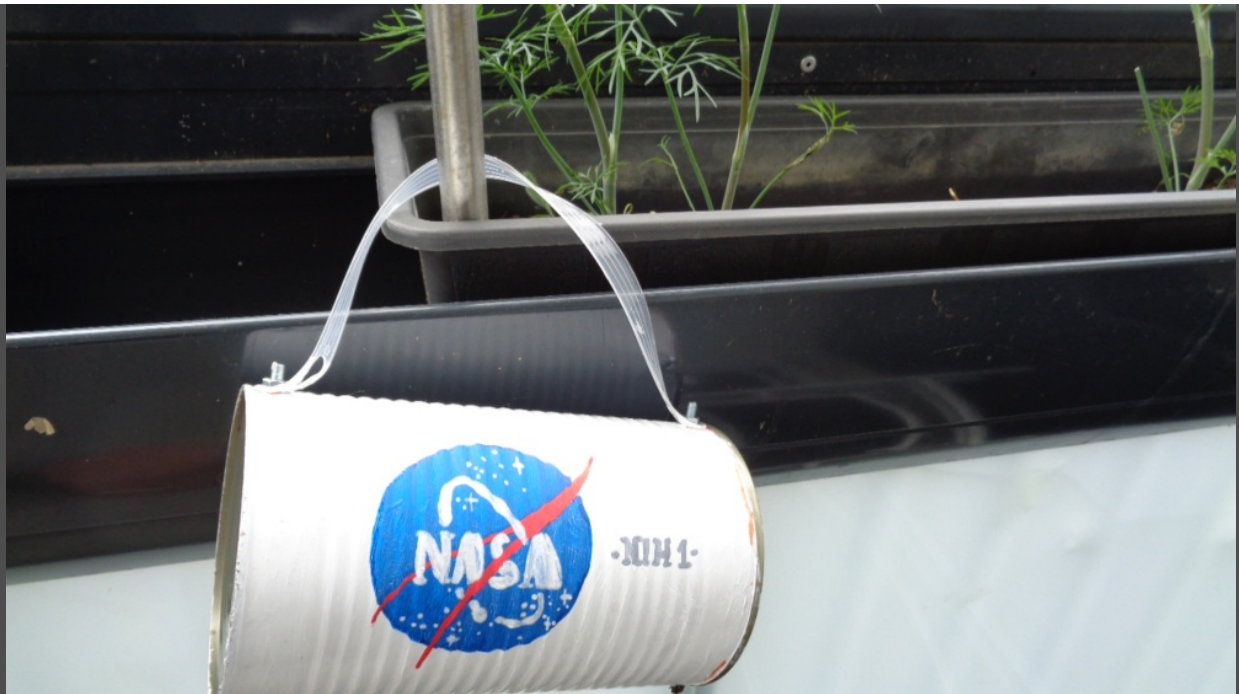


logo on the side. Immediately a concrete picture formed before my inner eye. Why not build a NASA space module out of the insect hotel. The insects are then the little astronauts who live in the module. Just like the human astronauts on the ISS. I took paint and brushes from my study, but also made sure to use only acrylic paint on water Baiss. I don't want to scare the insects away with solvents and chemicals. So I built the **NASA INSECT HOTEL 1 (NIH-1)**.









## Conclusion

Even though the tutorial was written for children, I really enjoyed it. I'm not a good draughtsman and the logo could have looked better, but it doesn't always have to be perfect. You can see that the NASA logo was drawn. I also have something for my balcony now, because we already have a lot of plants there anyway, some insects might fit in well. What I can think of right now. If you are interested in insects, take a look at [Bleeptrack's generative art project](#). This might really interest you. What I was still thinking about while doing handicrafts is that humans should reintegrate the nature in which they live into their everyday lives. Yes, technology is cool and helps us with everyday tasks, but unfortunately we forget much too quickly where we come from. It's not so long ago that we lived in caves and forests and if we don't start to respect and protect nature and its creatures we won't have nature anymore.